

Learning to Love the Word of God
Colossians 3:16
Jim McFarlane
9/27/09

OK. Who would like to come up and give a short summary of Steve's sermon message from last week?

You did get the outline and take note right? You did review your notes and prayerfully reflected and meditated on them during the study time you schedule regularly for yourself right?

Would your response be different this morning had Steve announced last week that there would be a test this week?

Yes, you would have made a point of taking notes and studying and preparing. Internalizing facts. You would have approached your effort with seriousness and a sense of accountability.

Steve: The Word of God Matters

- counters the pull of our culture
- plumb bob by which we can measure and guide our own life
- key to staying strong / free / safe / satisfied.

Seriously engaging the WOG is not just an exercise—it is life for you
Bible study is fundamental to your sustainable faith.

If the WOG is so important, shouldn't we be holding ourselves more accountable to learning it?

We need to be seriously engaging the in the WOG.

Trouble is that we treat this spiritual need, this essential, as if it were a want. Something that we can take or leave at our convenience. It is, sadly, of lower priority than the things of the world that we chase after. We don't make time for the word of God the way we make time for most other things crammed into our lives. We don't spend much money or effort on it. Oh, we come to church once a week; even attend a week-night small group. Some will say "I listen to Rich Nathan on the radio in the afternoon, or I have sermons on tape that I listen to every once in a while. But how many of us are actually doing "this". . . .

And those of you that actually do "this—are satisfied—honestly satisfied-- that you are doing "this" enough.

Col 3:16

"Let the word of God dwell richly in you. . . .

to dwell = live in ; take up residence in; Not just dwelling, but RICHLY dwelling in you. Not as a guest in the tiny back bedroom sleeping on the blow-up mattress. No, richly dwelling in every aspect your spiritual and worldly life. Given the master suite and the 4-poster king size bed. Seated at the head of your dinner table and offered the first servings from the platter.

-- “Let the word of God dwell richly in you. . . .

Getting the WOG to dwell in you, requires letting it in the door in the first place. You have to expose yourself to it--to take it in directly. Listening sermons and teachings is no substitution for directly exposing yourself to the WOG by reading your bible. Letting God speak to you directly through his written word. Letting you think and learn and grow your relationship with your creator God for yourself.

Proverbs 2:1-6

“My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.”

Treasure the Word of God. *“look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure”*

Our love grows for someone as we become more familiar with them (consider a love relationship with another person). Learn to love WOG, and you’ll give it priority in your life. Give it priority and your love for it will grow

If you treasure the Word, you will make time for it
If you make time for the Word, you will come treasure it

We love that with which we are familiar. Learn to love the WOG by becoming familiar with it through regular, committed devotional reading and study.

Don’t confuse devotional reading with study.

Most of us who are read the bible are engaging in devotional reading.

We pick the book up. Read what we find interesting asking the Holy Spirit to enlighten us as we read a little bit here and a little bit there.

Studying the bible is a specific process; a deliberate effort to determine true meaning and implication for us. This process is not done separate and apart from the guidance and influence of the HS, quite the contrary. His help is essential. Studying just makes use of many more learning processes tools available to us to insure that we are interpreting and applying the WOG correctly—so that we understand more deeply. And if we understand scripture more deeply, then our devotional time will be enhanced just that much more.

Bible Study Basics

Small group series:

How to study the Bible for all its Worth (Fee and Stuart)

-orientation to the various kinds of bible literature: letters, narratives, historical accounts, parables, prophecy, psalms, wisdom, and revelation to name a few. How to Read the Bible for All its worth gives us good orientation about their nature, historical background and literary context. good advice on how to read, interpret, determine original meaning and figure out what the applications are for us in this present age.

I hope you are approaching this teaching series with enthusiasm and expectation. Understanding the Word of God is central to sustainable faith and spiritual growth

Are you squeezing every bit of value out of this teaching series?

- Are you taking notes?
- Are you re-reading your notes as some point through the week?
- Are you doing the daily readings?
- Are you preparing yourself for the upcoming lesson by reading ahead. praying and coming to small group with the right attitude?

Tools:

1. Good translation

Formal or literal Equivalence: keep as close as possible to the Hebrew or Greek originals in word and grammar while still making it understandable English

Example: King James or New American Standard

Functional or Dynamic Equivalence: keep the meaning of the Greek or Hebrew originals but putting their words and idioms into a normal way of saying the same thing in English.

Example: New International Version

Free translation: an attempt to translate the “ideas” from one language to another with less concern about using exact wording of the original. Sometimes called a paraphrase-eliminating as much historical distance and linguistic barriers while still being faithful to the original ideas.

Example New Living Translation; The Message , Eugene Peterson

John 13:35

Wycliffe New Testament (WYC)

In this thing all men shall know, that ye be my disciples, if ye have love together.

King James Version (KJV)

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

New International Version (NIV)

By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

New Living Translation (NLT)

Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.

The Message (MSG)

This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciples—when they see the love you have for each other.

2. Bible Dictionary concordance commentary / Internet; Bible gateway.com
3. Time and space to study Scheduled time—accountability. Place to really study, not just read.

Bible Study Process

1. Setting the stage. Prayer. Attitude orientation

Start with the proper approach—that of prayer and reverence. If we do not have the right attitude and mindset, we will not get much out of God’s Word, because our will gets in the way of His!

Prayer! *“Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law”* (Psalm 119:18). This is the essential, first step to always, always starting anything—especially the studying of the Bible and communication with God!

Attitude! Have a good attitude based on seeking Christ rather than seeking self. Our minds must be clear and childlike before Him, because, when you read His Word, you are standing before the face of God—the Holy God! So, adjust to a good attitude and reverence for God and His Word.

2. Steps to bible study

A What does the text say?

- Who is doing the talking or writing
- who is the intended audience
- What is the historical backdrop? : learn about the author, audience, author's purpose and historical back drop. Study bibles and commentaries have good intro material
- Get the big picture. Read the whole letter or book first—like a novel , then break down to chapter then verse. Maybe start with a free translation then move back to a functional translation.

Example:

Get the general ideas with a free translation. Then go back to a translation that is more functional equivalent. With the free translation you grasp concepts, but you lose the feel of the original author.

Ephesians 3:17-19

The Message (MSG)

¹⁴⁻¹⁹My response is to get down on my knees before the Father, this magnificent Father who parcels out all heaven and earth. I ask him to strengthen you by his Spirit—not a brute strength but a glorious inner strength—that Christ will live in you as you open the door and invite him in. And I ask him that with both feet planted firmly on love, you'll be able to take in with all followers of Jesus the extravagant dimensions of Christ's love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live full lives, full in the fullness of God.

New International Version (NIV)

¹⁷ . . . And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

B What does the text mean?

This is where we use logic and sound reason. study a text carefully, rationally, and thoroughly to find the original, intended meaning. Do this without any preconceived ideas or agendas. Strive toward the “plain truth” of what the passage you are studying means. It is “common sense,” and yet, it is more than common sense. This is where we “pick” at the text, and in so doing, we are picking at our hearts and minds!

Remember historical and literary context

- Is there a lesson to learn?
- Is there a command to obey?
- Is there a sin to avoid?
- Is there a promise to claim and keep?
 - Make sure you trust and obey what God is telling you!

C What application does the original meaning have for us?

This is where you are seeking conviction, and allowing the work of the Spirit, through His Word, to show you principles and precepts to apply to your life. Be aware that sometimes you may not like what is shown, but it is what you need to hear. This is where we *hear* His voice, where we become transformed and renewed, and we grow in our faith and practice. This requires that our will be poured out and surrendered to His.

Conviction is very important to make us aware of our wrong ways and for us to align our path with His Way. God has His ways of refining and purifying us so that the waste products of pride and selfishness can be tossed aside while His real redemptive work and sanctification come to us in power and conviction.

Example 2

John 13:35 (NIV)

By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

Example 2

1 Tim 5:23

²³*Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.*

Parenthetical comment by Paul to Timothy. Has nothing to do with us! Know this only because of historical context—long relationship between Paul and Timothy and literary context: text before and after have to do with training up and ordaining elders.

2. Moving from study to reflection and meditation

A. “How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?”

This is the step that helps us *internalize* what we are learning. It is the process of interpretation, which means determining the meaning of the text—not just what it says, but what we do with it. So, when we ask “what does it mean?” we then need to determine how the answer is going to “fit” into our lives so we are changed individuals.

B. “What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?”

Have you ever wondered what blocks the increase of our trust and faith in Jesus Christ? Why do some people grow in their faith, character, and maturity while others do not? The main reason is that many Christians set up so many barriers and walls to block growth in Christ that they cause us to hold back from receiving and living the best He has for us.

If we remain obedient, faithful, and take seriously our study of His Word, He will show us the way. In most cases, sin is not the only thing that holds us back from growing in Christ. Rather, it is often the refusal to recognize His divine power because we do not take His Word seriously; therefore, we do not apply it earnestly and continually. When we are ignorant of who He is and what He can do, then we become afraid, and our growth and usefulness stagnates.

C. “What will I do about it?”

This is the question that we ask to see how the truth of what we are reading applies to our lives.

Jesus calls us to be *doers* with His Word. When we really hear God’s Word, without any barriers, it will impact us to the depths of who we are in personality, thinking, and attitudes, then it will lead us to godly actions. We have to be willing to hear it before we can practice it. If we do not practice, it becomes useless.

D. “What can I model and teach?”

This is the step where the rubber of our faith-formation tires meets the road of life. All of the previous five steps lead up to this. This is the main point of why we study the Bible—and that is to do something with it. We must ask ourselves, what have I learned that can benefit others?

God's Word will lead to godly action when it is received by a person who is rooted in Christ, whose life has been transformed. Thus, the Bible must be read, it must be adhered to, it must impact us. A visible and viable result will occur as our faith development

increases and our purpose is set for a life that is worth living and one that leads others to Him.

3. Moving from meditation to prayer